



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Testimony of Marie Salazar Glowski, ESL-Bilingual Education Consultant
Connecticut State Department of Education

Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC) Public Hearing on Bilingual Education

January 29, 2014

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to share some information with you regarding Bilingual Education. My name is Marie Salazar Glowski, and I am the ESL-Bilingual Education Consultant at the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE).

Bilingual Education in Connecticut is governed by Connecticut General Statute Sec 10-17e – j.

On October 1, districts report their identified English Learners (ELs) to the State. If there are 20 or more identified ELs who speak the same language in one school building, in the spring, the state will notify the district that the school will be mandated to provide bilingual education the following September. *Newly identified districts may have exactly 20 students identified as requiring bilingual education and technically will not receive any bilingual support until the following September losing one year. Also, if by the following September, their eligible student number is reduced by one or more due to parental refusal or students moving to another district, the district is still obliged to provide bilingual education to the remaining students even if it is only one student.*

Students may remain in bilingual education for no more than 30 months unless they are in a Dual Language Program. *This is a parameter that, overtime, we should examine in the context of best practice. We should not recommend abrupt or ill-informed changes in any direction, but we should continuously reflect and consider exploring perspectives.*

Bilingual education is defined as: A program that (A) makes instructional use of both English and eligible student's native language; (B) enables eligible students to achieve English proficiency and academic mastery of subject matter content and higher order skills, including critical thinking, so as to meet appropriate grade promotion and graduation requirements; (C) provides for the continuous increase in the use of English and corresponding decrease in the use of the native language for the purpose of instruction within each year from year to year and provides for the use of English for more than half of the instructional time by the end of the first year; (D) may develop native language skills of eligible students; (E) may include the participation of English proficient students if the program is designed to enable all enrolled students to become more proficient in English and a second language. *The bilingual statute as it is written provides a good deal of latitude as to how a district may implement a bilingual education program. For example, if an elementary school is identified as having to provide bilingual education and there are 20 eligible students, located throughout K – 8 classrooms, it would be difficult to provide a traditional bilingual education program. (A-E) Since students may enter a school at different grades and different times during the year as eligible for bilingual education, it is a challenge to offer a class of bilingual students a continuous increase in the use of English from year to year as the statute requires with a mix of students at different levels of received bilingual programming. (C) Dual language programming is allowed and is a promising practice but not always fiscally or logistically practical for a school. (E)*

The SDE has identified bilingual certified teachers as a shortage area. It is difficult for districts to hire qualified bilingual teachers particularly if they are a small district and the teacher anticipates that as the bilingual eligible numbers drop, the district may terminate the position. This situation obviously presents ongoing challenges.

The Department advises districts with schools that are mandated to provide bilingual education in May. These districts may apply for a bilingual grant in the summer. They are expected to implement a bilingual education program in September and will submit a Bilingual Annual Evaluation Report to the state. The state provides technical assistance regarding bilingual education to school administrators, teachers and families. Periodic visits are made to bilingual eligible schools to visit their bilingual education programming.

There are 36 districts/charters with 244 schools that must provide bilingual education this year. This number fluctuates from year to year based on the number of English Language Learners that are reported to the state who speak the same native language and are located in a school.

Bilingual grant funding is insufficient for a district to implement and maintain a high quality bilingual education program. The entitlement amount for 2013-2014 was \$1,916,130.

The school community and district must support bilingual education programs if they are to be successful.

Research supports the advantages of bilingualism. It provides intellectual advantages and studies have indicated a reduction in dementia within bilingual populations. As we prepare students for participation in our global economy, we must view bilingualism and multilingualism as an asset.

Universities and the workforce value bilingual candidates.

Students from dual language programs have been known to outperform their peers academically by grade 8. Unfortunately, the subgroup academic data in the early grades often result in a district being identified as in need of improvement due to poor performance of their ELL subgroup. If the state could also disaggregate the data by language level or years for ELs in a dual language program or those receiving bilingual education, progress could be more readily determined for students in these programs. If the funds which are returned to the state from district/schools that indicate their parents do not want bilingual education and thus do not apply for the grant could be awarded to districts/schools that wish to start a dual language program – it would at least be an incentive and seed money to develop this type of program. The CSDE is exploring this possibility. The CSDE has created documents to provide further guidance in bilingual education programming. On the ESL-Bilingual state website there is a Bilingual Education Statute Question and Answer document. Additionally, there is a Position Statement on the Education of Students Who Are English Language Learners. One section of the guidelines for this position statement provides a section for Bilingual Teachers' Responsibilities. There is also a Language Transition Support Services Guidance Document which provides guidance on supporting bilingual eligible students who have met the 30 month exit criteria. We would be happy to provide the Commission with links to these documents.

I would be happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

Comments in italics are the observations or professional judgment of the ESL-bilingual state consultant.